



DANIEL BOONE'S BUTTON

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"YOU KNOW, DANIEL BOONE IS SUPPOSED to have spent a winter in this rock shelter. Do you suppose there's any chance of finding something he left here?"

My heart sank as the advertising man asked the question. I had been engaged to supervise excavation of a small rock shelter on the Bob Evans Farms near the little college town of Rio (pronounced Rye-o) Grande, Ohio. My object was to learn more about the little-known Late Woodland occupations so common in southern Ohio rock shelters. Bob Evans' object was to see just what was in the "Daniel Boone Cave" that he had known since he was a boy. The object of the advertising agency was to develop the rock shelter as a tourist attraction, and to encourage people to visit Bob's nearby sausage shop. Already

the agency had developed a successful farm festival, an annual chicken flying contest, and an outdoor historical pageant which set to music much of the history of nearby Gallipolis and its pioneers, the famous French Five Hundred who had emigrated from France to the barren red clay hills of "Gallia Country" in 1790. Under the impression that they had purchased a piece of Paradise, the aristocratic Bourbon refugees from the French Revolution arrived on the site of Gallipolis, Ohio, to find themselves penniless, even further from Eden than from France, and without title to any of the land, victims of an early land-promotion scheme. Eventually the United States Government ceded the *French Grant* in Scioto County as compensation to the bilked Frenchmen, but many of the Gauls preferred to stay at Gallipolis, purchasing their home sites a second time.

Professional archeologists had warned me to watch out for modern promoters, and now it looked as though they might be right. "Yes," the advertising man continued, "I can just see Old Dan'l camping here. It was the winter of 1792—he and Colonel Safford, and James Burford lived in that cave. They caught over 100 beavers there at Adamsville. Yes, I can just see it."

And I could just see the banner headlines: ARCHEOLOGIST DISCOVERS ARROW SHOT AT DANIEL BOONE, or maybe SCIENTIST FINDS DANIEL BOONE'S BEAVERS' BONES! Better to nip this thing in the bud: "I can't afford to get involved in anything like that, that's for the historians to argue about. I'm an archeologist, and I'm here to study the



Front and back of the
"pewter" button believed to
be associated with Daniel Boone's
stay in the Bob Evans rock shelter.
Diameter 5/8 inches.

Indian occupation of the shelter. Besides, even if Daniel Boone did stay here, it isn't likely that he would have left anything identifiable." I tried a little sarcasm to bury the idea once and for all. "Of course, if we found a belt buckle with the initials D. B. carved on it. . . ."

But the ad man had an answer for me. "You know, down Raccoon Creek a few miles is Boone Rock; it's supposed to have his initials carved on it and the date 1785. The only problem is that the rock is right in the creek, so the only way to see it is to canoe down the creek." It seemed worth a canoe trip to settle the Daniel Boone question, so we visited Boone's Rock, only to find carved on it the year 1785 and the initials I. S. "Well, that's a funny-looking D. B.," I said. "Maybe it stands for 'Indian Scout'. What do you think?" The advertising man kept his thoughts to himself.

But the next day he was at it again. It had become, as one of the French Five Hundred might have put it, an *idée fixe*. When a piece of glass turned up in one of the excavation units, I heard: "You don't suppose that could have belonged to Daniel Boone, do you?" My attempts at humor became more and more sardonic. "No, unfortunately it's a little known historical fact that Daniel Boone did not drink soda pop, at least not orange pop."

When a piece of barbed wire was uncovered, I thought for a moment that I had convinced the man of the error of his ways. Instead of the anticipated question, I heard him say, "Now that couldn't have belonged to Daniel Boone. They didn't have barbed

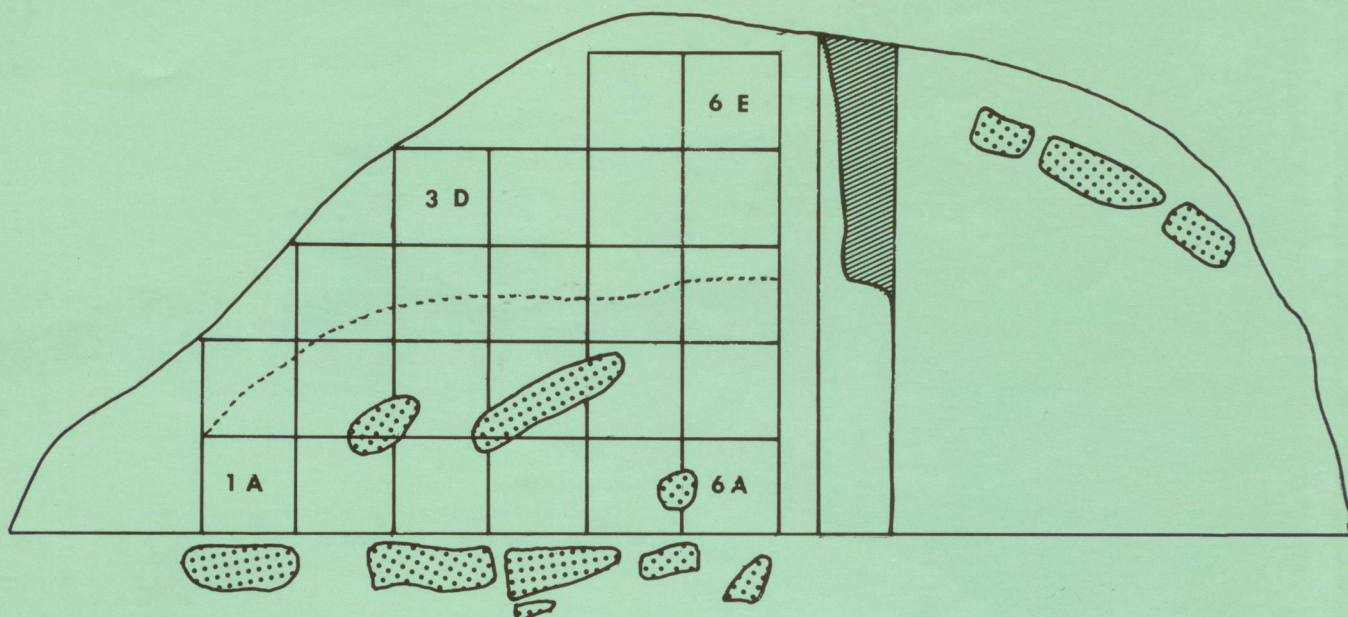
wire in those days." My elation was short-lived, for he added, "But you know, during the Civil War, when Confederate General Morgan came through here, all the farmers hid their horses up here in this cave. I bet this barbed wire got up here then."

I was nonplussed. Things were getting out of hand, and I was beginning to feel somewhat like a horse myself, with Daniel Boone and General John Hunt Morgan both on my back. The next time, I promised myself, I would be as adamant as Boone's Rock itself. This shelter wasn't big enough for both Daniel Boone and me.

So, when John Glenn, a Gallipolis science teacher and volunteer crew member, turned up a small "white-metal" button in a thin layer of ash at the back of the shelter, I was ready. "You don't suppose . . ." was as far as the advertising man got. "Not a chance," I said. "I don't know anything about buttons, but there is no way you are going to tie this up with Daniel Boone. They made buttons like this well into the nineteenth century."

"Well, what about General Morgan? The Civil War was in the nineteenth century." He had me there, and all I could do was to mutter something about meaning the *late* nineteenth century.

I was right about one thing—I did not know anything about antique metal buttons. The archaeologist had gone out on a limb and soon found it necessary to start sawing. In analyzing the material from the Bob Evans rock shelter, I found that experts are in general agreement about this particular style of "pewter" button. It may date from 1726 or 1760



BOB EVANS ROCK SHELTER GALLIA COUNTY OHIO

0 5 FT

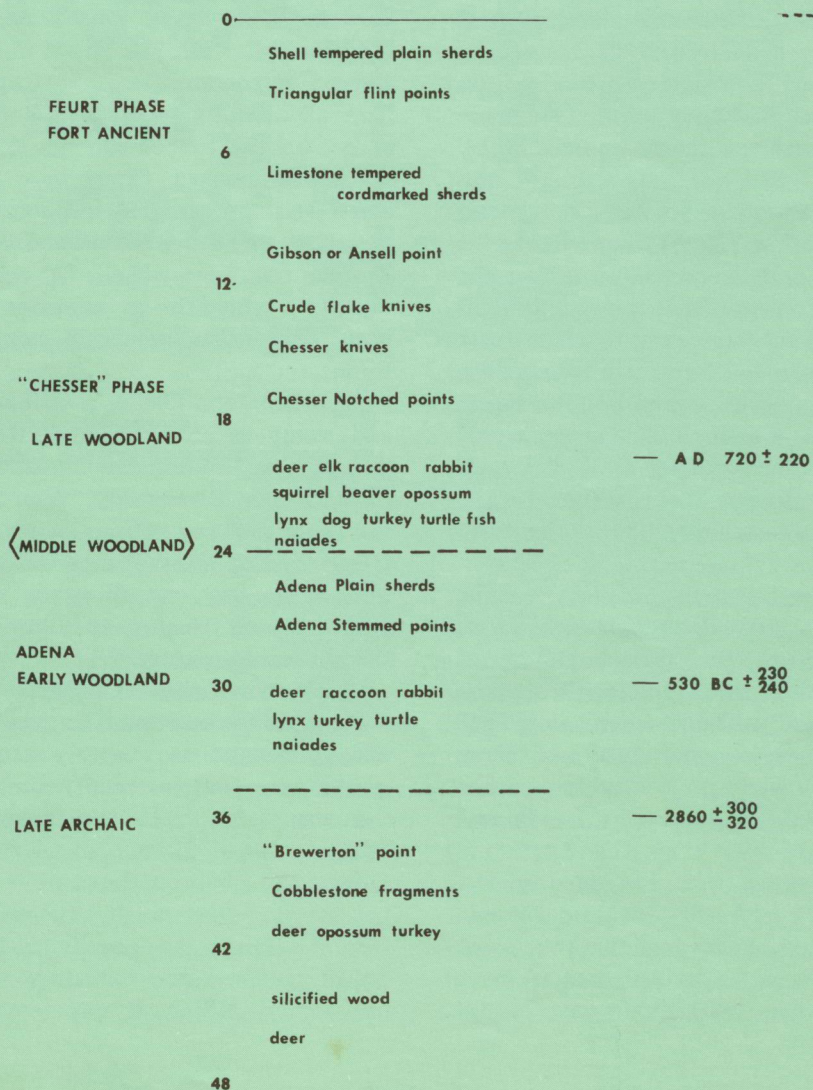


ROCK FALL



ROCK LEDGE

DEPTH IN INCHES



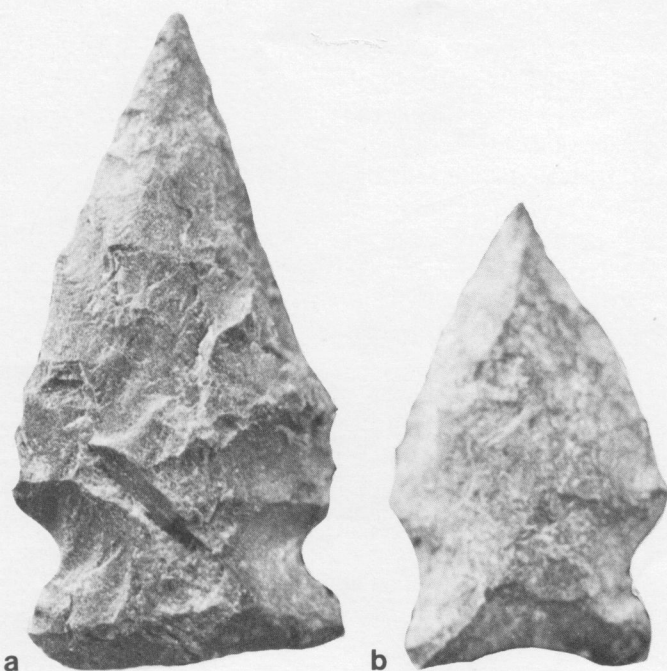
to 1776 or 1785, depending upon the expert you choose, but no later. Then I went to the history books, to learn that "Daniel Boone, the famous Kentuckian, James Burford, the celebrated story-teller, and Colonel Safford were firm friends and trapped together in 1792 on Raccoon Creek, near Adamsville." (The Evans rock shelter is three-quarters of a mile from Adamsville, on Raccoon Creek.) I also learned that "In his first trapping expedition up the creek with Daniel Boone, Safford took him to this cave, and they occupied it together for some time. The smoke stains of their camp fires can be seen upon the roof to this day."

My advertising friend was magnanimous in his victory. In answer to the inevitable question, "Do you suppose this button has anything to do with Daniel Boone staying here?", he did not require an unequivocal affirmative. I got by with "It's more than likely," which was the best I could muster. And, mercifully, he pointed out to me that "Of course, we don't know that that button actually belonged to

Daniel Boone. It could have been Colonel Safford's, or even Burford's. After all, they were here, too."

In addition to what I euphemistically refer to as the "Historic Component," the Bob Evans rock shelter has yielded a nicely stratified series of Archaic, Early Woodland (Adena), Late Woodland ("Chesser Phase" of the Cole Horizon), and Late Prehistoric (Fuert Phase of Fort Ancient) components. Radiocarbon dates from Case Western Reserve University's Dicar Laboratories have provided a firm date of A.D. 770 for the "Chesser Phase" component which represents the major occupation of this shelter. The Late Woodland Chesser Notched flint points vaguely resemble side-notched Archaic points retrieved from the base of the excavations, but the stratified nature of the shelter leaves no doubt about the respective ages of these point types. The Archaic occupation has been radiocarbon-dated at 2860 B.C.

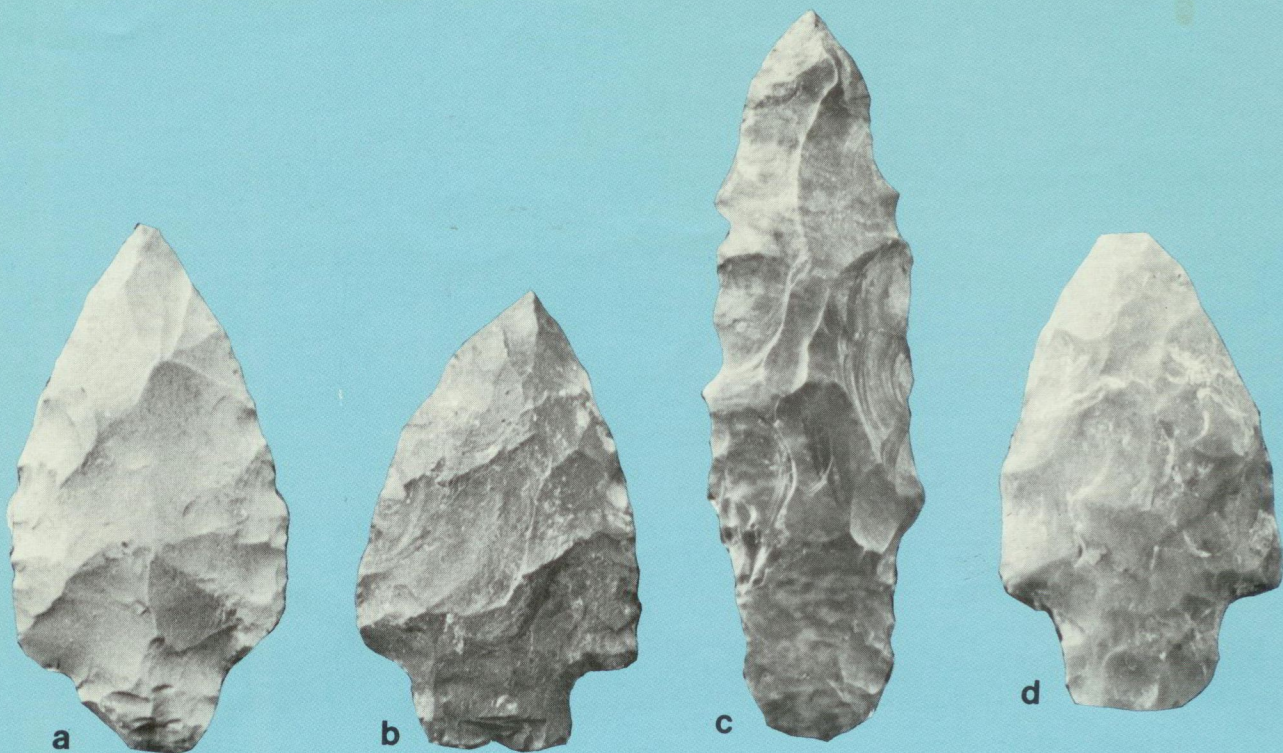
The Early Woodland Adena Phase is represented by numerous stemmed points and Adena Plain grit-tempered ceramics. A hematite celt and tubular pipe



Two Archaic points from the Evans shelter, the larger found at a level carbonated at 2860 B.C. Length of a, 2 inches.



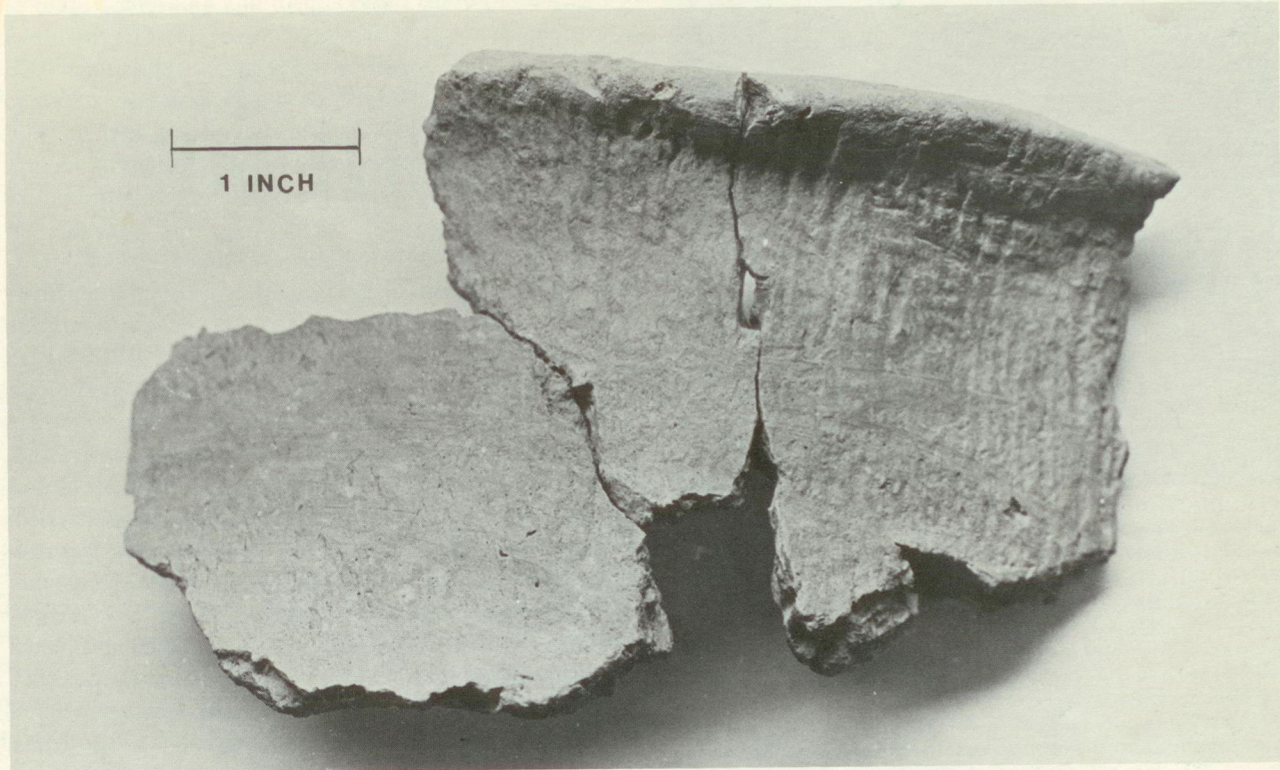
A Chesser Notched point, dating A.D. 770, similar in form to Brewerton-like points dated at 2860 B.C. Length about 2-1/2 inches.



Early Woodland Adena points
dating A.D. 200 to 600 B.C.
Length of c, about 2-3/4 inches.



Chesser knives from the Late Woodland
level dating approximately A.D. 700.
Length of c, about 2 inches.



fragment also belong to this component, which is probably related to a small hilltop mound located on the opposite side of Raccoon Creek.

Preliminary analysis of the bone and shell refuse reveals little or no change in subsistence pattern through time. There is no evidence of maize, "nutting stones" are common at all levels, and there is a heavy predominance of pebble chert and local Brush Creek and Cambridge flints throughout the midden deposits. The faunal remains are overwhelmingly bones of the Virginia deer. Shellfish remains (river clams) are very common, but fish bones are extremely rare, a remarkable fact in view of the proximity of Raccoon Creek. Hickory and walnut shell have been recovered from the Early Woodland level. The utilization of flint from the Cambridge Limestone Member appears to be unique for this area, because this marine limestone is rarely siliceous enough anywhere in Ohio to serve as a source of flint. A chunk of silicified wood was found in the Archaic level, indicating that utilization of this unusual type of lithic material is not confined to the Hocking Valley of southeastern Ohio.

The Evans rock shelter probably served primarily as a winter camp from Archaic through Historic times. It may well have been occupied throughout the year during at least Late Woodland times. In fact, several modern-day squirrel hunters stumbled into the shelter while excavation was in progress late in the fall. They were surprised to find the shelter "occupied."

Limestone-tempered cordmarked
Late Woodland rim sherd
dating A.D. 700-1000.

Chesser Notched knife
from the Late Woodland level.
Length 2-3/4 inches.

